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## ART COLLECTIONS.

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### THE CHARVET COLLECTION OF ANCIENT GLASS IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK.

[Plates VII. and VIII.]

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"Honor to whom honor is due." For the results of this paper the writer is indebted to the work of W. Fröhner, entitled *La Verrerie Antique. Description de la Collection Charvet*.<sup>1</sup> For this dependence there is indeed an illustrious authority in the *Römische Alterthümer* of Theodor Mommsen and Joachim Marquardt. In Vol. VII. p. 723, *Privatleben der Römer* by Marquardt, the passage here translated introduces the section relating to glass: "The merit of having solved the problem [of treating the subject of ancient glass] as far as possible at present, belongs however to W. Fröhner, from whose learned and critical history of the art I draw the leading conclusions." If additional apology be needed for gleaning from the work of another, with due acknowledgement, the material offered, let it be noted that the folio volume, of one hundred and thirty-nine pages of text, used as an authority, is accessible to few readers in this country. The luxury of color illustration in one hundred and twenty-seven examples of the size of the originals, in addition to forty vignettes in the text, is of the highest quality of French perfection. Only a small edition was printed, and the copies, now rarely offered for sale, can scarcely be had at less than the cost of production (about \$60). Happily the Charvet Collection itself is in New York City, and for illustration of this article the originals are at the service of the public.

The Charvet collection, containing four hundred pieces of ancient glass, was purchased in 1881 by a trustee for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, through the intervention of its Director, at that time in Paris. Although made by a private collector, it was the finest in France, and will bear comparison with the collections in the great museums.<sup>2</sup> M. Charvet had

<sup>1</sup> Le Pecq. J. Charvet, Chateau du Donjon, 1879. M. Fröhner has been *Conservateur Adjoint* in the Department of Ancient and Modern Sculpture of the Louvre, and is distinguished for his catalogues of the Ancient Sculpture and Ancient Inscriptions of this Museum, for his monograph on the Column of Trajan, and for other important contributions to archæology.

<sup>2</sup> In Perrot and Chipiez, *Histoire de l'Art dans l'Antiquité*, III., *Phénécie*, p. 734, we find the remark concerning the collection of M. Greáu: "La collection de verres antiques qu'il possède est certainement la plus riche qu'il y ait en Europe depuis que la collection Charvet est partie pour l'Amérique."

a passion for undamaged pieces, and had selected these examples among thousands which had passed through his hands. This collection is a valuable possession for two especial reasons: in comprehensiveness and in quality it stands among the first; and it has served as the text for an archæological treatise which has become the only adequate compendium of the subject. We may add a third reason: the illustrious discoverer of the Cypriote antiquities in New York had preserved his other collections intact at the expense of his glass and his coins. To defray the expenses of his excavations many of his finest specimens of glass were sacrificed, and among these M. Charvet found a portion of his harvest;<sup>3</sup> thus the magnificent collection of Cypriote glass in New York has its appropriate supplement and extension in the Charvet collection.

We have said that the work of M. Fröhner on the Charvet Collection has become the only adequate compendium of the subject of ancient glass; but the most interesting feature of his work is the confession of his ignorance, and the statement of the unsolved problems which the subject of the history of ancient glass offers. In fact his work, although the best, is really that of a pioneer, for the subject had never been attacked by antiquarians in earnest until Fröhner penned his catalogue.

It is a happy coincidence, when nature adds its charm to that of art, when popular attractiveness and historic interest are combined in the same study. This coincidence is an aspect of our subject. Although highly appreciated by amateurs for its iridescence and artistic qualities, on the other hand, glass has never attracted the class of archæologists devoted to inscriptions, for, aside from a few makers' names, it generally has none to offer. It does not present, like the Greek vases, the Etruscan mirrors, or the ancient gems, a field for the student of mythology. It does not convey, like the ancient sculpture, an all-embracing view of Greek civilization and religion. It does not shed such light on ancient history as may be found in numismatics. And the difficulties of the subject are connected with these same causes of neglect by archæologists. Glass rarely having inscriptions, the history of the subject evades one by the absence of dates. Glass rarely having pictorial designs, the subject cannot be built up by such relation with other arts as is often offered by coins, by the pictures of vases, or the general interlacing of forms and subjects in all other branches of the ancient arts. Finally, the immense variety of forms and of colors at the disposition of glass-blower and moulder has resulted in such a versatility of aspect and of type as to have left the subject in a state of chaos.

<sup>3</sup> About three hundred fine pieces in the Fitzwilliam Museum, at Cambridge, as well as some of the finest antique pieces of the Slade collection in the British Museum, are from the Cesnola excavations.

And yet, once more, these difficulties of the subject arise from the aspects which give it the greatest importance. Of what other branch of ancient art, for instance, can it be asserted that it had no decadence; and yet it is this fact which causes the supreme difficulty in the matter of classification. Among the plate illustrations which have been chosen for typical purposes, as far as the limited number would allow, the latest piece (No. 6, Pl. VII.) belongs to the early Middle Ages. It is the only mediæval piece in the Charvet collection. Found in a Frankish tomb at Bellenberg-Voehringen, it probably dates from the sixth century.<sup>4</sup> As the custom of placing objects of art and of use in tombs generally disappeared among the German tribes with the triumph of Christianity, a moment's reflection will show that the sixth and seventh centuries must be very nearly the limit of our knowledge of early mediæval glass. And yet of the very date when the religious revolution deprives us of the objects on which estimates may be based, we find a piece which will compare favorably with any of antiquity. Or, noting the adjacent No. 5 of the same plate, which is from the tomb of a young girl at Beauvais,<sup>5</sup> and is dated by a Roman coin of the third century, what more beautiful work in glass could be found in any period? Certainly no statue, coin or design of the third century A. D. could lay claims in its own department to a parallel standing, as compared with earlier works.

This continuance of the glass art at a high pitch of excellence in the latest period of antiquity, also attested by the wonderful development of the Byzantine mosaics, reminds us that the Venetian glass is rather a survival than a revival of the greatness of antiquity. Whether we attach more or less importance to the actual local continuance of an ancient art from the fifth century, when Venice was founded, until the time of the eleventh century, when records on this subject begin in Venice; or whether we attach by contrast more importance to the influence of Byzantine art on Venice; the link with antiquity is equally unbroken. The latest known vessels of antiquity and the earliest known of Venetian manufacture exhibit the same artistic qualities, and were therefore connected by those which have disappeared. In early antiquity the Syrian manufactures were renowned, and they were still in operation in the twelfth century A. D., and the Jews of Constantinople were famous in this branch of manufacture in the sixth century A. D., as well as throughout Europe in the Middle Ages. In the earliest antiquity the

<sup>4</sup> Beaker of transparent glass with light amber-colored relief lines in spiral. Leaf-shaped attachments in dark amber color. Height  $7\frac{1}{4}$  inches. No. 198, Mus. classif.

<sup>5</sup> Transparent glass with spiral ribbing. Opalescent effect from irisation. Height  $8\frac{1}{4}$  inches. No. 154, Museum classification.

Egyptian manufactures had reached the highest pitch of art, and those of Alexandria were still famous in the late Roman period: the sand and alkalis of Alexandrine import were used in Venice throughout the Middle Ages.

This absence of a decadence in ancient glass deprives the antiquarian of that standard of style by which at once, in the Roman, Greek, and Eastern arts, centuries are distinguished; nor are even these national distinctions clearly determined. In architecture, sculpture, and painting we learn to distinguish the Egyptian, the Greek, and the Roman. By the glass art we learn to unite them. In no other art can antiquity, from first to last, be so recognized as an essential whole. And the reason is apparent. In glass the art and the matter are, so to speak, one. In architecture, sculpture, and painting there was always the same original dependence on the great mechanic art of the East—the same continuance of them. But elsewhere the form conquered the matter; and who stops to think that the masonry of the Parthenon is fitted like the Phœnician, that it was quarried by a use of metals drawn from Egypt, measured by standards of Assyrian or Chaldæan origin, and raised into position by an Eastern mechanic science. In the glass art the genius of the individual artist and artisan combined was above the limitations of race and of epoch; and, whereas the transformations of history are elsewhere revealed, here lies the study of its continuity. How was this continuity established and preserved? was it not by commerce? Take for instance another gem of the Charvet collection, the first piece of Plate VII. (No. 4).<sup>6</sup> By the aid of an inscription giving the maker's name, *ENNION* we know that this piece of Greek glass from Cyprus (Cesnola, excavations) belonged to a factory which had commercial relations with the Crimea (an amphora by the same maker is in the museum of St. Petersburg), with North Italy (two drinking-glasses in the Museum of Turin, one found with a coin of Claudius; another glass in the Museum of Parma), and with Sicily (drinking glass in the Museum Catajo). Ennion's factory is believed by Fröhner to have been in Sidon. This one object, then, gives a striking instance of the far-reaching character of ancient Mediterranean commerce.

Once more the difficulties of the subject and the peculiar lessons it teaches are inseparable. In the general absence of inscriptions how difficult to say, in view of this wide diffusion of a single maker's work,

<sup>6</sup> Color, deep mazarine blue with moulded reliefs of good Greek style. Height  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches. Assigned by Fröhner to the early Ptolemaic period—in spite of the coin of Claudius found with one of the Italian pieces. M. Charvet paid 4,000 fr. for it. No. 322, Mus. classif.

that a piece of glass belongs to the country in which it was found. As an example of the pieces which it is so difficult to elucidate, I give the centre piece (No. 2) of Plate VIII. The type here represented is defined by Fröhner as that imitating the appearance of precious stones—in this instance, of agate or of onyx. After a description of the type which this vase represents, of the localities in which it is found, of the specimens which are known, Fröhner concludes with the remark that only discoveries still to be made can determine the locality of the manufacture or the date.<sup>7</sup>

Notwithstanding these uncertainties the subject is not lacking in certain broad aspects of special historical value. Glass was, in the later days of antiquity, in more general use, for a greater variety of purposes, and of a higher average of artistic quality in color and in form, than in our own times. In early antiquity, at least out of Egypt, it was valued as a gem, and objects made of it were associated with vessels of silver and gold. The small vessels of opaque colored glass, Nos. 1 and 3 of Plate VIII., the earliest known to Mediterranean commerce, show, by their diminutive size and the fact that they are frequently found in stands of beaten gold, the rarity and value of glass in its earlier days.<sup>8</sup> To find the use of glass for domestic purposes general and common it is necessary to reach the first century B. C., if we take into account the countries of the western and eastern Mediterranean. Then began the period which covered even exterior walls with colored mosaics, and floors with tiles of this material; which so multiplied its use for domestic purposes that hucksters made their living in Rome by exchanging lucifer matches for bits of glass to be remelted in the furnaces. In the museum of Naples there are 3,000 pieces: in the Cesnola Cyprus collection there are now exhibited about 2,900 pieces. It is computed that in a single year at Rome, 1858–59, 1,200 vessels or fragments of value were found. Even in Winckelmann's time, the 18th century, cart loads of fragments were being used for the Italian furnaces, and as far back as the 12th century, the monk Theophilus shows us the Franks melting fragments of vases and mosaics for the manufacture of their own stained

<sup>7</sup> Bottle vase with ground of so deep a blue as to appear black. Agate-like stripings of white with a little amber and light blue. Height  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches. From Cyprus, Cesnola excavations. No. 247, Mus. classif.

<sup>8</sup> 1. Alabastron of opaque white glass, with thick walls, ornamented with claret colored stripes and zigzags. Height  $3\frac{3}{8}$  inches. It was found in Attica, and is marked with the No. 307 of the Museum arrangement. 3. In shape of an Amphora, of opaque, deep sky-blue color, with irregular horizontal stripes of yellow, zigzag bands of yellow and turquoise. Height  $3\frac{1}{8}$  inches. From Corinth. No. 390 of the Mus. classif.

glass. For this period of endless number and countless variety no illustration short of a hundred specimens would be at all adequate, and it has been thought best not to attempt to illustrate it at all in the present article.

For this period, which has left such multitudes of specimens, our uncertainties are mainly of detail. It is in the centuries back of the Christian era that the study becomes difficult. That glass was a comparative rarity in Greece proper, in the fourth and fifth centuries B. C., appears sufficiently certain.

Fröhner asserts that not a single type can at present be definitely assigned to a Greek origin of the distinctively Greek time. That the art is originally Oriental, at first Egyptian, and then Syro-Phœnician, is positive; equally positive, that a general use of glass in the eastern Mediterranean countries must have preceded and prepared its extensive use in the West. Still the process of the extension of the foreign commerce of the older factories and the establishment of new centres of manufacture toward the West is very obscure. The unity of the art of glass is more significant and more apparent than the sequence of steps in its diffusion or development.

One feature of the Cypriote glass-finds as connected with the history of Greek pottery has not, as far as known to me, been hitherto made prominent. Although Cyprus has been a mine of wealth for the study of Greek pottery, Greek vases of the good period are almost absolutely wanting. Some explanation might be found in the decadence of the Greek power in Cyprus in the fifth and fourth centuries B. C., under Persian ascendancy (until its overthrow by Alexander), or in the provincial perpetuation of the earlier Phœnician types. But may not this early disappearance of Greek vases in Cyprus be related to the gradual diffusion of the glass art toward the West? Certain it is that the disappearance, throughout the Greek world, of the Greek (so-called Etruscan) vases, in the 1st century B. C., is coincident with the extension of the use of glass in the West. The custom of regarding the "Samian" Roman ware as the successor to the art of the Greek vases is manifestly in disregard of the fact that glass in the Roman period largely took the place of pottery in the Greek. Undeniable as is the decadence of Greek art in the Roman time, such a case of extinction as is exemplified in the art of the Greek vases is otherwise absolutely unknown. Undoubtedly the Sicilian and Greco-Italian vases of the late period exhibit a marked decadence, but not such as to explain an absolute disappearance of figured designs had not the potter's art given way in bulk to that of the glass-blower and glass-moulder. Is it a daring hypothesis, which would explain the absence in Cyprus of Greek vases in the styles of the fourth and fifth centuries

B. C. by the diffusion, from Egyptian, Syrian, and local factories, of the use of glass, which, at a later date, also supplanted them in the mother country and in the western colonies? This much, at least, is certain, that many of the forms and types common to the Roman Imperial time must be considered, like the art as a whole, to be an oriental inheritance, perpetuated in the East and extended to the West.

In a general way, the ability to date a piece as actually of the Roman Imperial period, or to fix it as a type known to that period, is easily acquired. This ability is based on a comparative study of the glass found in Gaul and Roman Germany with that of the countries of the east shores of the Mediterranean. Aside from the Greek colonies headed by Marseilles and from Southern Narbonese-France, these countries did not come definitely within the field of Mediterranean civilization till after the Roman conquest and the close of the first century B. C. If, then, we find, in Syria, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, or Italy, a specimen analogous to those found in Roman Gaul or Germany, such a specimen is actually or potentially of the Roman Imperial time, because a piece found in Roman Gaul or Germany is dated as Roman by its locality (Britain is to be classed with them in this connection). On the same principle, a type confined to the Etruscan or Greek portions of Italy in common with Greece, Cyprus, Syria and Egypt would be, almost certainly, earlier than the second century B. C.

Under this head falls the very important class of pieces exemplified by Nos. 1 and 3 of Plate VIII. Of all types this is the most interesting from its very uncertainties, and the fact, made patent by Fröhner's exposition, that its history must be re-written subject to his conclusions. According to Fröhner, an entire class of glass vases has been assigned by archaeologists to a Greek or Phœnician art, when in reality it belongs to neither. The vases in question are of small dimensions and rarely more than double the size of those illustrated. They are in form generally confined to the *alabastron* (No. 1), or imitation of the same form common in the ancient Egyptian alabaster vases; to the *amphora* (No. 3), a vase with small handles, pointed lower end and small mouth; to the *xenochœ* or pitcher-shaped, and the *krater* or wide-mouthed vase. Round bottomed vases, in other respects like the amphora, are also common. Of these the commonest forms are the *alabastron* and the *amphora*. The limitation as to shapes is in striking contrast to the endless variety of forms common in other ancient glass, and this limitation is connected with the opaque character of the vitreous material, which so closely resembles a porcelain as to have been classified by one writer<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Wilkinson, *Ancient Egyptians*, Vol. II. pp. 12 and 150.



under this head.<sup>10</sup> The decoration is most frequently in irregular horizontal bands of wave lines and zigzags, and the most frequent colors are yellow and turquoise on a dark-blue ground, or turquoise ground with yellow and dark-blue wave lines and zigzags. Claret-colored lines on a white ground form a well-defined but less numerous variety. These small vases are supposed to have been toilet pieces used for perfumes and cosmetics, and were highly prized, since they have been found in the tombs on stands of beaten gold, as already remarked. Their value is also shown by the fact that, in the class of Cypriote tombs where they occur, not more than one tomb in fifty yields a piece (examples in case 22, Cesnola Glass). They are not known to the Roman Imperial time and the centuries after the Christian era. The earliest dated glass vessel in the world belongs to this class; the little jug of the British Museum, in opaque turquoise-blue glass with branches and bands in yellow.<sup>11</sup> The hieroglyphs engraved around the neck give the name of Thothmes III. and consequent date of about 1600 B. C. The form, approximating that of a shortened German seltzer bottle tapered toward the base, is a variation from those specified, but the character of the glass and its colors are the same. Other specimens of this opaque colored glass, in all the forms mentioned, in the British Museum, are from Egyptian remains in the Sinaitic Peninsula, and are ascribed, on the authority of Dr. Birch, to the xixth dynasty, c. 1500-1400 B. C., on account of the character and inscriptions of the associated remains; others in the British Museum are from tombs of the xviiiith dynasty.<sup>12</sup>

Other specimens of this glass are frequently found in Egypt, but without equally definite or accessible means of fixing a date (in the Abbott Collection of the New York Historical Society there are two fine specimens of the "Krater" form). Large numbers of this class are from tombs in Greece, the Greek colonies, and Etruria. All the pieces of this class in the Charvet collection (42 examples) which have specified localities are from Greek tombs. From such finds arose the presumption that these small vases were of Greek origin, a presumption not opposed by the Etruscan finds, since the so-called Etruscan pottery, with rare exceptions, is certainly Greek and imported.

This presumption is, however, only a counterpart of that earlier mistake, already detected by Winckelmann and long since exploded, but

<sup>10</sup> The Chinese manufacture a glass equally resembling, and equally distinct from, porcelain.

<sup>11</sup> No. 283 of Harrison's photographs, and in Wilkinson's *Anc. Egypt.* (ed. Birch) Vol. II. p. 142.

<sup>12</sup> Harrison's Photographs, No. 283.

still perpetuated in the popular term "Etruscan vases." But while the "Etruscan" vases of pottery are Greek, the "Greek" vases of glass are Egyptian. Caere, the locality of Etruria which has most abundantly supplied these vases, was the most important entrepôt of Egyptian commerce (by Phœnician or Greek mediation), and the objects found with them are of Egyptian character. In Greek localities, those in most intimate commercial relations with the East, like Athens, Corinth, Camirus in Rhodes, and the Greek colonies of Cyprus, have furnished the greatest number.

This brings us to the suggestion of a Phœnician origin. In the catalogue, made by Mr. Nesbitt, of the glass in the South Kensington Museum, the opaque polychromatic glass vases in discussion are uniformly without specified localities and uniformly designated (with one exception) "Egyptian or Phœnician." In the Egyptian Guide of the British Museum, Dr. Birch suggests the Phœnician Sidon as a possible source for the specimens from the Sinaitic Peninsula and for those from the tombs of the XVIIIth dynasty.

To the hypothesis of Phœnician derivation Fröhner offers the general rejoinder of "no evidence" and the remarkable fact, that there is not a single glass vessel in existence earlier than Greek or Roman time which can be positively ascribed to a Phœnician manufacture. It need hardly be remarked, after what has been said, that discovery in a Phœnician tomb is not positive evidence of Phœnician manufacture. Notwithstanding the undoubted importance at an early date of Phœnician glass factories, the precedence of Egypt and the dependence of Phœnicia on Egypt cannot be denied. But that this particular type was ever borrowed or imitated cannot be at present argued from specimens or from ancient authorities.<sup>13</sup>

To sum up the demonstration of the Egyptian origin of these vases, there is to be noted; first, the palpable correspondence of colors and of paste with the Egyptian enamels—especially the *cachet* of the Egyptian turquoise and other blue-greens; the positive evidence of the presence of many specimens in Egypt, and the negative evidence of their rare occur-

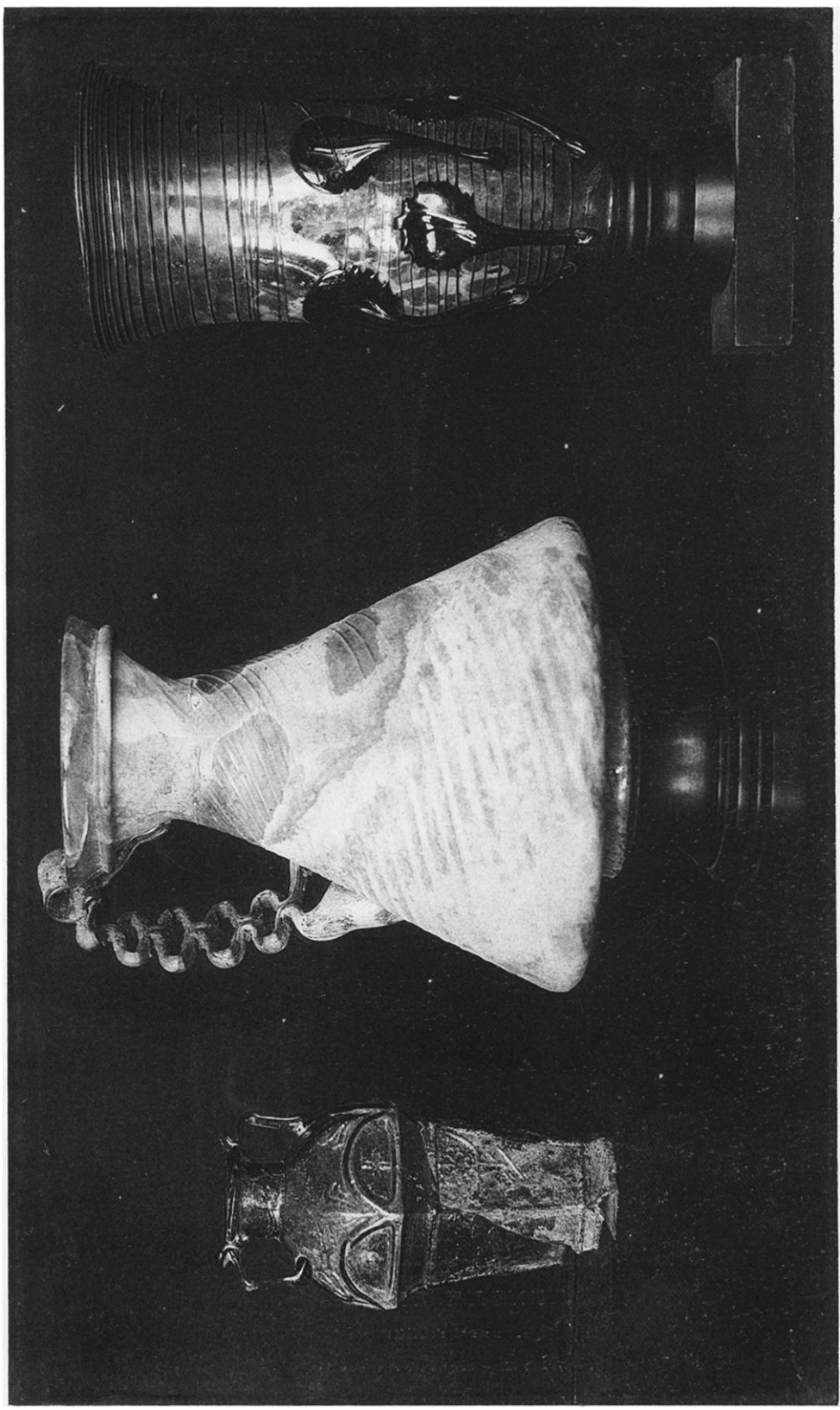
<sup>13</sup> "A part quelques fragments de l'époque gréco-romaine, il n'existe pas dans nos musées un seul verre que l'on puisse attribuer à la Phénicie avec une entière certitude" (Fröhner, p. 19).

"Depuis quelques années on donne à l'industrie phénicienne les flacons en verre opaque multicolore. Il peut y en avoir dans le nombre qui viennent de Sidon; mais en thèse general rien n'est plus erroné que cette classification" (ibid. p. 21).

"On les appelle *verres grecs* parcequ'il n'existe pas de verre grec de l'ancien style, tantôt *verres phéniciens*, parcequ'on ne connaît pas de verre phénicien digne de ce nom, et qu'il fallait bien combler des lacunes aussi regrettables. Mais ces attributions ne reposent sur aucune base sérieuse" (ibid. p. 41).

rence in Phœnicia, as far as finds have been made or reported; the fact that the earliest existing dated glass vessel is an Egyptian piece of this type; and the corroborative evidence furnished by a passage of Strabo. This author, as quoted by Fröhner, was informed in Alexandria that only there could be obtained the sand proper for the making of "the beautiful polychromatic glass." Fröhner adds that the term *βήσιον*, by which the "Alabastron" was distinguished in Alexandrine Greek, is unknown to the other Greek dialects.

WM. H. GOODYEAR.



GLASS VASES FROM THE CHARVET COLLECTION.

Plate 8.



1.



2.



3.

GLASS VASES FROM THE CHARVET COLLECTION.

(Metropolitan Museum, New York.)

(Nos. 1, 2, 3.)